



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FIVE MEN WITH FIVE GUNS SENTENCED BETWEEN FIVE AND SEVEN YEARS FOR POSSESSING WEAPONS

PHOENIX – Elier Fernandez-Fernandez, age 22, Bernabe Molina-Villarreal, age 31, Ivan Garcia-Ruiz, age 26, Leonel Campos-Lopez, age 21, and Miguel Manjarrez-Gutierrez, age 30; all citizens of Mexico, were sentenced here to between five and seven years, by U.S. District Judge Neil V. Wake. All five defendants pleaded guilty to Possession or Use of a Firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, hostage taking.

On February 19, 2006, the Phoenix Police Department was contacted by a man who stated that his two sons along with one of their friends were being held for ransom in Phoenix. The victims were threatened with violence if the ransom was not paid. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arranged to buyout the three victims and during that meeting arrested Molina-Villarreal and Manjarrez-Gutierrez, who were armed with a loaded handgun. Law enforcement with the assistance of one of the defendants and a victim, located a rented house in Phoenix where an additional 39 illegal aliens were harbored by the remaining three defendants. The windows on the stash house were boarded up on the inside and had bars on the outside of some of the windows. Four loaded weapons: two shotguns, an assault rifle, and handgun were found at the stash house and the illegal aliens at the house stated they were held at gunpoint and threatened in order to get them to pay an increased smuggling fee. Also located at the stash house were surveillance cameras and monitors that were used to watch the aliens inside the house and anyone entering the residence.

Molina-Villarreal was the most experienced smuggler and was sentenced to 84 months; Manjarrez-Gutierrez who was determined to be a manager of the stash house received 78 months; Campos-Lopez and Fernandez-Fernandez were smuggled aliens turned smugglers and received 60 month sentences; while Garcia-Ruiz received 72 months sentence as he fell in between his co-defendants in terms of culpability.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Phoenix Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Lisa Jennis Settler, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona

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